eighth
by kawachi izumi

the eighth team
@Japanzai

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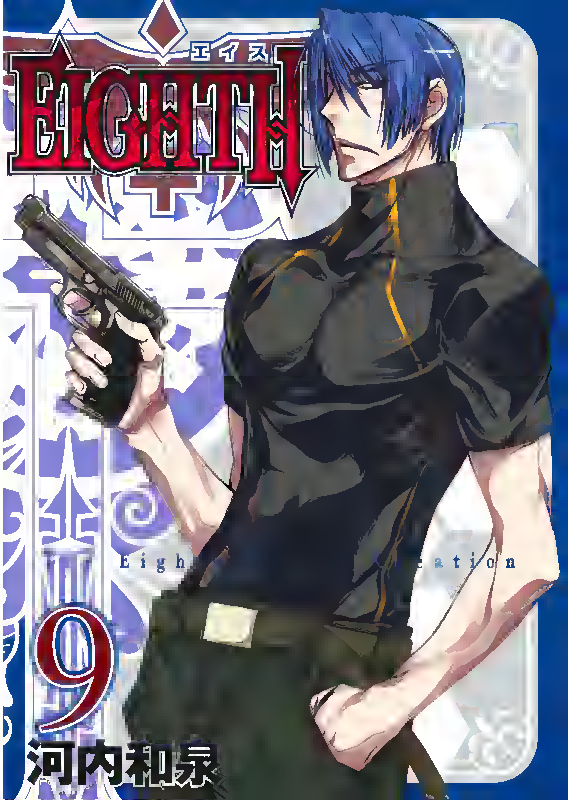
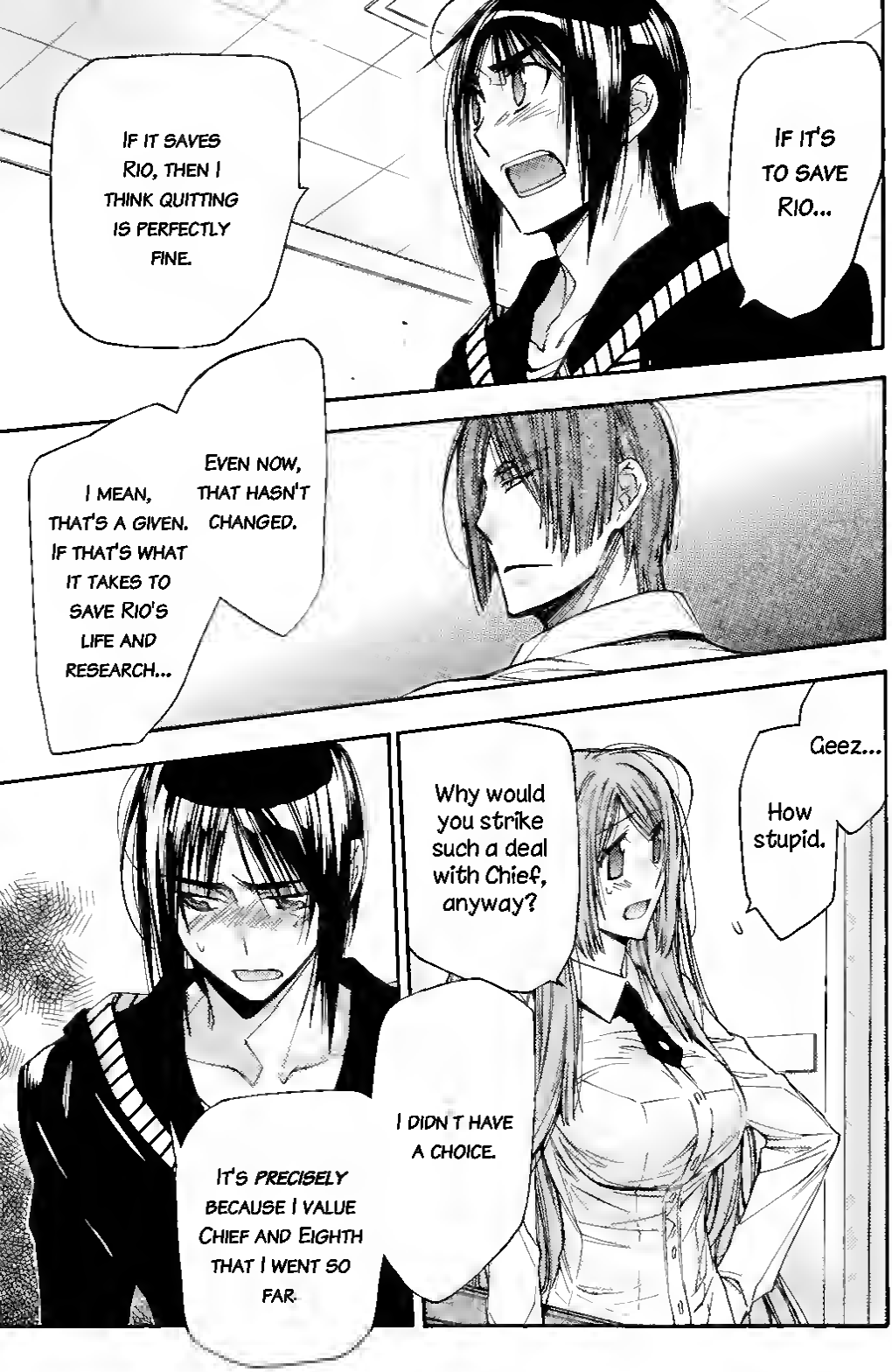


Operation.34 (オペレーション)
My Pace

...What will you do, Naoya-kun?
.....
Hey---
Could it be that you just said you would quit, and ran off to the Vatican without thinking at all?
N-No way...


If it's to save Rio...
If it saves Rio, then I think quitting is perfectly fine.
Even now, that hasn't changed.
I mean, that's a given. If that's what it takes to save Rio's life and research...
Geez...
How stupid.
Why would you strike such a deal with Chief, anyway?
I didn't have a choice.
It's precisely because I value Chief and Eighth that I went so far.

Besides, I didn't want the use of Celcia's power
to become "the consensus of Eighth"...
.....
Naoya's only reason----
for quitting the Eighth guards and going to the Vatican
was "at that time, Celcia was no longer at Eighth".

And that's because I took Celcia there.
...LUCA.
What if Celcia hadn't gone to the Vatican?
Furthermore, wouldn't it have been better if that Rio girl had gotten sick earlier?
HEY... CUT IT OUT.
...WHAT A POINTLESS CONVERSATION.
... Mhm.
I see what you mean.
But I think you should carefully consider what you'll do next.

What...?
If you don't become a guard at Eighth...
If you embrace Celcia and leave this room--
it would be nice to live together, just the two of you.
SFX: SIGH
Hm?
Something like that...
H-HEY, NOW...

is not what Celcia wishes for.
...You're feeling responsible.
If Naoya-kun had safeguarded his own position, it would have been awful for Celcia.
...Now listen, Luca.
Think it over carefully, okay?
.....

I DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT IT'S BEST TO JUST DO WHAT MARI-SAN WANTS----
SFX: WHISPERING---
ひそひそ
That's some serious intimida-tion.
...That's one monster of a woman there.
EH?
She's always like that
Luca.
I'm sure you'll come work for us at Eighth.
Here.
Luca.
And ...

What's this?
?
Peel
An item the Chief left for you.
...Mari-san,
I'm really sorry about this.
beep
I'm sure you already know this, but...
as far as the world is concerned, Celcia is dead.

SFX: TAP
As such, stuff like having children is forbidden. It would make things... complicated.
The Old Boy's Catholic, so tell him this:
"If you take her for a spin, use this."
No drinking and driving.
You did, after all, confess right in front of the Chief.
CON-FESS?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
ALL I DID WAS SAY HOW I FELT.
!?
It was most definitely amusing
!?
Yeah, it was.
DON'T FUCK WITH MEEE EEEE!

I WOULD NEVER, EVER
USE CELCIA LIKE THAT!
WAH?!
YOU'RE INSINCERE!
EH?! HEY!
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?!
Wait! Don't leave me here.
...OH, LUCA-SAN WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU WERE SHOUTING, SO...
.....

I...
would absolutely never, ever act toward you in a way you dislike.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
SO, FROM NOW ON, PLEASE SLEEP IN YOUR OWN FUTON
?
?
Huh? Why?
EH?
Naoya-kun.
You should think about it, too.

MARI-SAN...
Luca's signing on with Eighth so that the room won't have to be vacated.
It's the Chief's intention to create "a place for Celcia to learn".
...YEAH.

Eighth doesn't want to lose you.
You are superbly capable---

But the Chief won't merely dismiss you taking action on your own and quitting.

I know that you're not that kind of child,
but even so, you can't take it back, especially not in this case.
You would lose faith.
...I...
... MARI-SAN.
.....
.....
Say...
You said to me before: "Don't quit."
.....
!
Why?

WHY? THAT'S...
If you were gone,
I'd hate it---
ME TOO.
I want you to be around.
You want to protect the employees and research of Eighth, don't you?
Wasn't that your aspira-tion?!

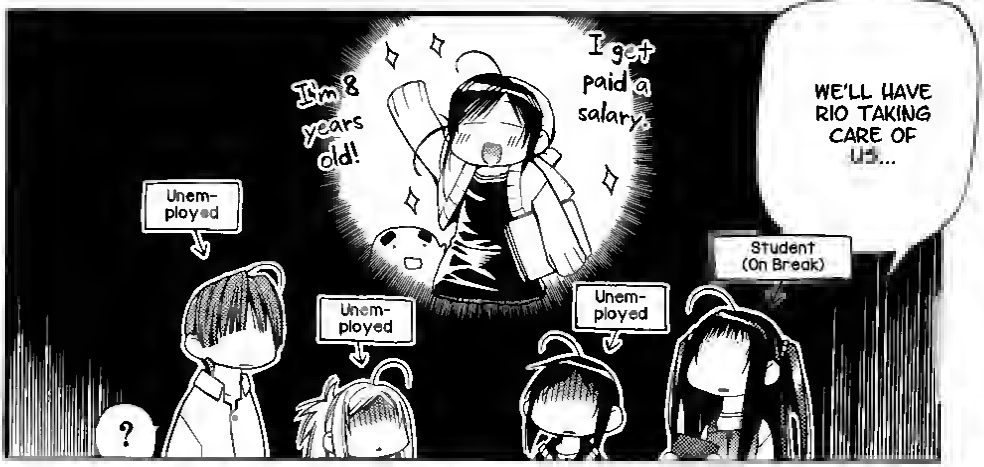
If you want to leave, I can't stop you.
But if not, then please...
think of some way to stay.
Got it?
All of this is---

THE CHIEF'S FAULT!
WHOA. YOU'RE SUPPORTIVE.
I'M THE ONE WHO CAME OUT AND SAID I WAS GOING TO THE VATICAN.
WHAT?
HE DOESN'T GRANT YOU ANYTHING YOU WISH FOR, DOES HE?!
I WENT THERE KNOWING THAT.
.....
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S HARASSING YOU.
I GET IT. I'LL GO TO THE CHIEF MYSELF,
and make an earnest request!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

SFX: GRRRR
ムキィィ
OH, I'M FIRED UP!
AAH..
I'LL KEEP SENDING HIM BLANK EMAILSSSS!
HE HE HE HE HE
I WISH YOU'D STOP DOING THAT FROM MY PC.
SFX: WHOA
うおい
YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS.
That is wrong.
WRONG.
IT'S MY FAULT THAT... SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPENED.
IT REALLY IS...
MY PROBLEM.
IT DOESN'T CONCERN YOU, CELCIA.

HOLD IT, HOLD IT! I'LL TRY ASKING DADDY.
IF IT'S DADDY TALKING, CHIEF MIGHT LISTEN.
THAT WON'T WORK. CUT IT OUT.
WHY?
IF I WERE TO DISRESPECT DR. HAKASE'S RESEARCH FOR SOMETHING I DID, IT WOULD BE THE SAME AS USING CELCIA'S POWER.
NOT AT ALL.
I'M SAYING IT'S UNJUST!
IF CELCIA WERE USED FOR IPS TRIALS, IT WOULDN'T ENDANGER RIO.
THAT HASN'T CHANGED EVEN NOW, HAS IT?!
EVEN THOUGH SHE ISN'T BEING USED, HOW COME NAOYA ALONE IS PAYING THE PENALTY? THAT'S JUST WRONG!

HEY, IS THAT MY WALLET?
How horrible!
IN THE FIRST PLACE, IF HE DOESN'T WORK, WE CAN'T EAT!
AT THIS RATE


I'm 8 years old!
I get paid a salary.
WE'LL HAVE RIO TAKING CARE OF US...
Unemployed
Unemployed
Unemployed
Student (On Break)
?

WHY WOULD I GO SO FAR FOR YOUR SAKES?
IT'S FOR CELCIA'S SAKE!
Quit kidding around
HOLD ON... LUCA, COUGH UP SOME EUROS!
CALM DOWN, HIKARU.
I'LL BRING BACK DADDY'S CREDIT CARD.

I...
I AM...
IF THERE IS ANY-THING...
I CAN'T DO THAT!
SFX: EEK
Do with it as you like.
I'M TELLING YA, IT'LL BE FINE. WE'LL MANAGE SOME-HOW.
WE CAN STAY IN THIS ROOM... PROBABLY.
IF LUCA ---
Hey.
THAT I CAN DO...

Stop it.
WHAT ...?
FOR CELCIA'S SAKE...
WERE YOU GOING TO LOWER YOUR HEAD TO ME
AND SAY "COME JOIN EIGHTH"?
YOU THINK YOU'LL GET ME TO SELL MYSELF OUT?!
IDIOT.
YOU'RE READING TOO MUCH INTO THIS!
The problem is how you take it!
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF---

!
You've always watched over Celcia, so you should know that well.
If you never speak your mind and always just do as you're told, the one you'll hurt most is Celcia!
If you're the one telling her, then...
she can accept it---
.....

HM?
just walks on by, ignoring them
...WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO, CELCIA?
TO RIO-SAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM
EH?
I'M GOING TO APPEAL TO RIO-SAN
I'LL TELL HER TO GET WELL, AND THAT WE'RE EAGERLY WAITING FOR HER TO COME BACK HERE.
PLUS ...

IF NAOYA ISN'T AT EIGHTH WHEN SHE GETS BACK TO THE LAB, SHE'LL BE SAO, WON'T SHE?
IF RIO-SAN PUTS IN A GOOO WORD FOR YOU, EVEN CHIEF-SAN CAN'T REFUSE.
I'M OFF.
YES, MA'AM.

WHOA.
"Yes ma'am" my ass!
CELCIA, WAIT!
WAIT--
LUCA, HURRY AND CATCH UP.
EH...? WHAT?
SORRY. HERE, TAKE THIS!
HIKARU, PLEASE STAY HERE. WE'RE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL.
Oh.
?
THAT'S LUCA'S!
HUH?
falls out
WHAT'S...

SFX WHAAAAAAAAAT?!

SFX あああああ!?

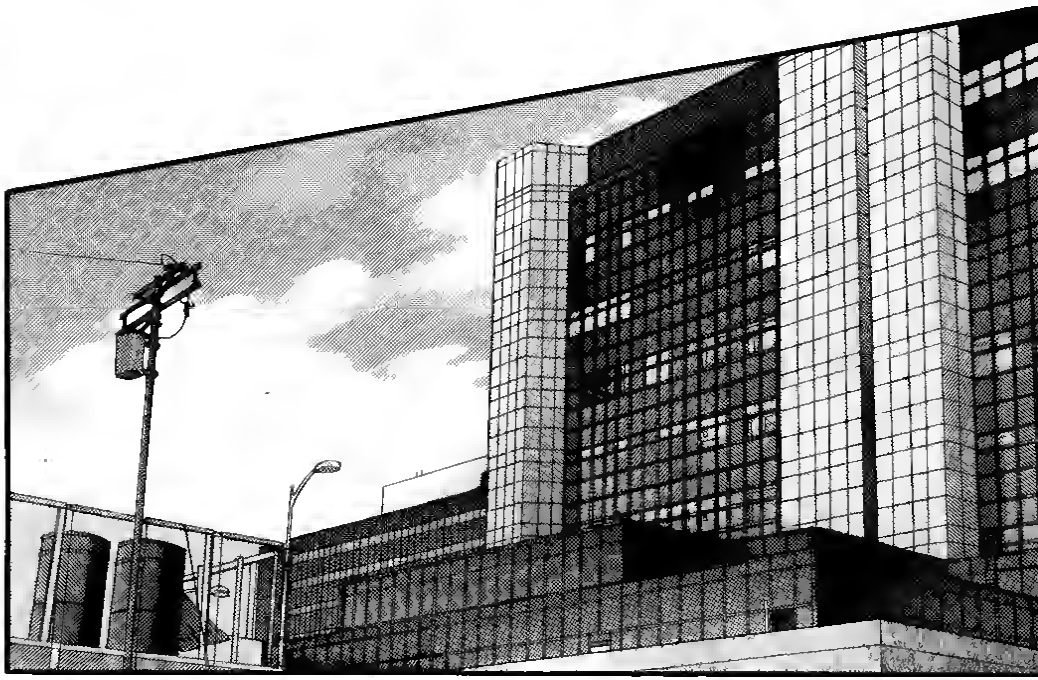
...CHIEF-SAN SHOULD KNOW HOW HAPPY RIO-SAN IS WITH NAOYA'S WORK AS A BODYGUARD.

EVERYONE ELSE RECOGNIZES IT, TOO.

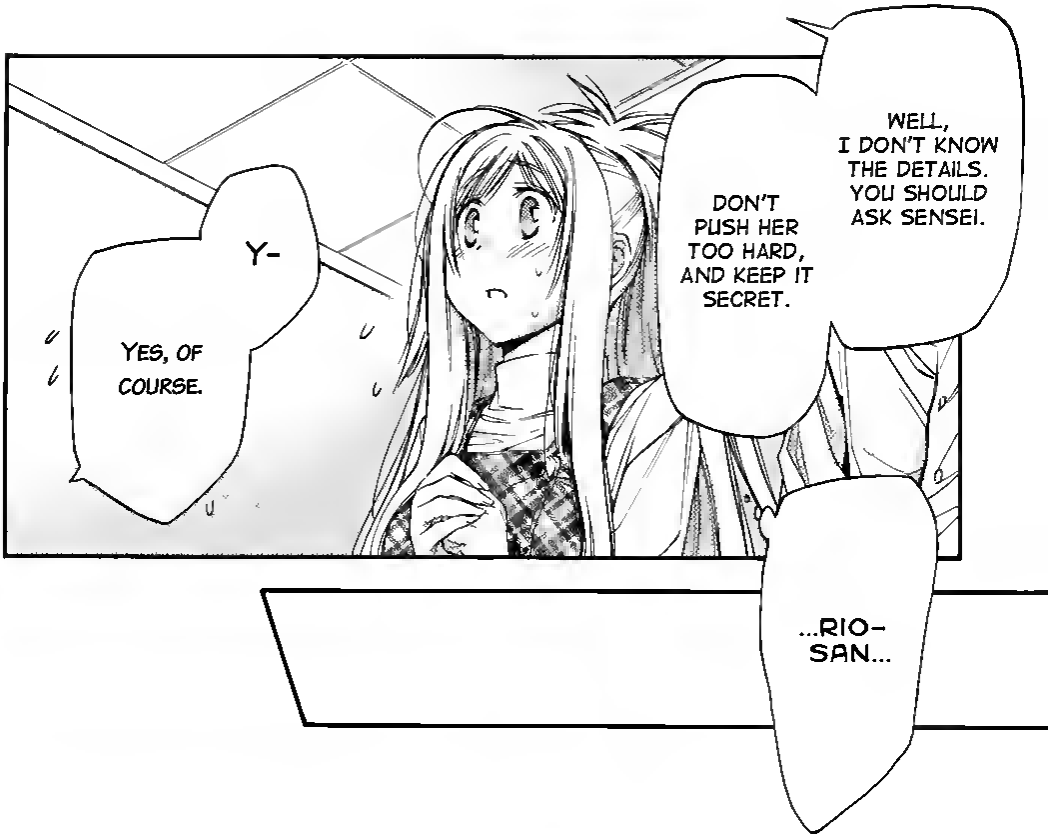
SURELY CHIEF-SAN
HAS SOMETHING ELSE HE WANTS TO SAY---
AT THE VERY LEAST, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING
SFX PFFFT
...Chief is a natural sadist.
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
Celcia believes in him...
The Chief...
IT'S NOT REALLY ANYTHING TO BE UPSET ABOUT.
Every direction, huh...?

STILL ANGRY...

THAT I PASSED OVER THE RESEARCHERS.

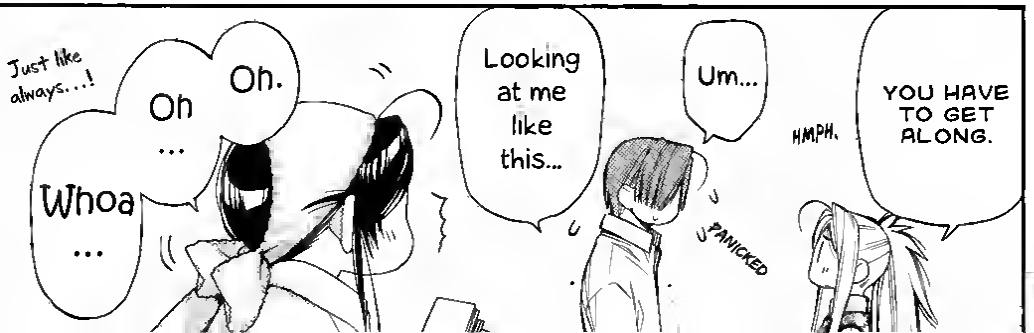


EXCUSE US.
OH MY
THAT'S RIO-SAN'S ROOM
HUH?
THOSE ARE OUR... ER, EIGHTH'S GUARDS.
SENPAI.
HM?
OH, NAOYA. ARE YOU VISITING?
YES.
JUST PAYING OUR RESPECTS.
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
NO.
WE CAME TO DELIVER SOME DATA TO RIO-SENSEI.
OH, BUT...
IF THAT'S HOW YOU MEANT IT, THEN YOU MIGHT SAY "SOMETHING HAPPENED"---
EH?


WELL, I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS. YOU SHOULD ASK SENSEI.
DON'T PUSH HER TOO HARD, AND KEEP IT SECRET.
Y-
YES, OF COURSE.
...RIO-SAN...

GLOOMY
.....

SFX: TREMBLE...
SFX: MENACING...
HE'S JUST LIKE HE ALWAYS IS.
RIGHT?
This way...
UM...


Just like always...!
Oh.
Oh...
Whoa...
Looking at me like this...
Um...
PANICKED
HMPH.
YOU HAVE TO GET ALONG.

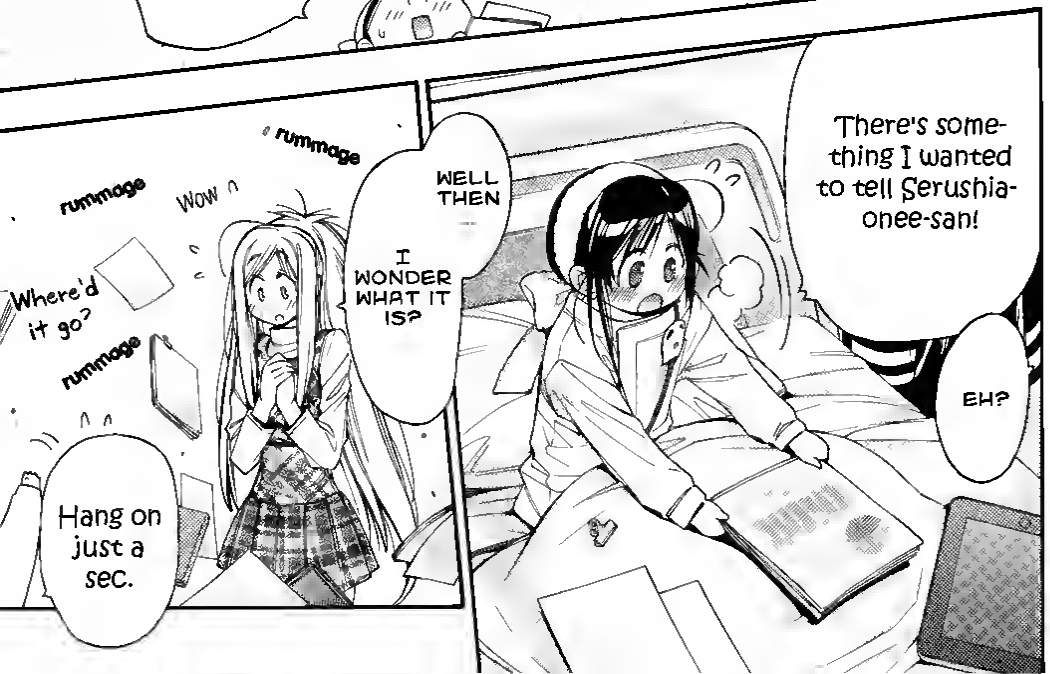
どーん
...Shouldn't you be worried about yourself?
LUCA-SAN!
*Being Compassionate
Ehehe
Even so, I'm glad Ruka-onii-san's come back!
The other day I told Onee-san "He still hasn't come back". I was worried---
?

Yah.
I'm doing things right, so I'm okay.
ARE YOU LISTENING TO THE DOCTORS LIKE YOU SHOULD?
This is hard.

Ah, but...
even here, I can do plenty.
Sure enough, they told me not to go walking around anymore.
Ah... Yah.
BUT YOU'RE CONTINUING YOUR RESEARCH HERE.

Even though I'm not on-site, the research team is working hard for me at Eighth.
The guards also keep me briefed.
.....

I've gotta stay focused, too...
Gasp
Oh, right!


There's something I wanted to tell Gerushia-onee-san!
EH?
WELL THEN
I WONDER WHAT IT IS?
rummage
rummage
rummage
Wow
Where'd it go?
Hang on just a sec.

SFX PAT PAT
Umm... Here...
It's about iPS.
Um...
EH?
It's a report on how the time to make them has been shortened.
EH...?
Yah, yah.
Until now, the fastest time was about 20 days.

But it got shorter, just like that.
Until now, making iPS from skin cells took one month,
and with T-cells from blood, it took 23 days.
This time, we used adipose-derived stem cells, and it took---
10 days!
surprise
10 DAYS...

Eh? But, Rio...
Didn't you say a while ago "We still can't make them quickly"?
Yah.
Yah.
This is research from a doctor I know.
It wasn't me.
They're researching it all over the world.
It's just that you can't see it.
so as fellow researchers, we hear about it while it's in progress.
Wow...
The research results are put out instantly,
...TH--

THAT'S WONDER-FUL!
IT'S GOTTEN THAT FAST_
Ehe~
How-ever...
I won't lose to them, either.

It changes any cells to the required cells without using iPS.
I'll think of ways to shorten the time even more.
But now, the results of the experiments from before are already here!
The guards were kind enough to deliver them to me--

RIO TENNOUJI IS CURRENTLY HOSPITALIZED WITH INFANTILE LEUKEMIA.
I DON'T BELIEVE WE CAN USE HER AT ALL IN THIS STATE.
...YES.

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE TO CURE IT.
IF IT'S JUST HEADHUNTING, WHAT'S THE POINT OF FORCIBLY TAKING HER OUT NOW? I SUPPOSE IT'LL BE TO DO RESEARCH WITH ASTORIA.
WHAT IS MORE IMPOR-TANT...
is that Celcia is with Tennouji.
THOSE TWO SEEM TO GET ALONG QUITE WELL.
SO... HOW SHALL WE PROCEED?